

INTRODUCTION

The Vanier Centre for Women, which opened in Brampton in 1969, is a 96-bed institution for adult females in Ontario serving sentences up to two years less a day. Named after the former Governor General of Canada and Madame Georges P. Vanier, it replaced Mercer Reformatory as the only provincial correctional centre for female offenders.

The Centre consists of three medium security separate housing units (cottages) - Timberlea, Kontiki and Hochelaga - within the Complex, and a minimum security cottage, Ingleside, which is outside the perimeter fence. Each of the cottages is self-contained and equipped to house 24 residents in single rooms. Facilities within the Complex include a medical health centre, chapel, library, gymnasium, classrooms and industrial work areas.

PROGRAM PHILOSOPHY

The Vanier program has evolved since 1965 to reflect the ministry's goal of protecting society and reducing illegal behavior through the provision of services and facilities, and by assisting the individual to achieve a more successful personal and community adjustment.

COTTAGE PROGRAM

Following a medical assessment upon admission, a resident is sent to Timberlea where an intensive two-week assessment/orientation program is carried out. This involves a multi-disciplinary team composed of correctional, academic, industrial, recreation, social work and psychology staff. When appropriate, a

psychiatric consultation will be included. Upon completion of the assessment, an internal program board consisting of senior inter-disciplinary staff decides, according to the needs of each resident, where she will be housed and provides her with an initial program based upon the assessment.

Each resident is assigned a correctional officer to help her formulate her plans, and each cottage has bi-weekly house meetings to discuss and resolve day-to-day matters. Monthly planning meetings are held at which the resident discusses her plans and progress with staff representatives from the different areas. Where possible, programs are tailored to meet the needs of individual residents.

Kontiki and Hochelaga cottages, combined with the assessment/orientation cottage Timberlea, form the activity-based medium security complex. Ingleside, the minimum security unit, affords a resident a community-placed program which involves active program placement in employment, education or volunteer activity.

EDUCATION PROGRAM

In addition to academic and commercial subjects, the teaching staff instruct in graphic arts, cooking and personal sewing. Emphasis is placed on life skills such as consumer education, employment skills/job search, child development, and human growth development.

A resident may be involved in school full- or part-time. Many residents lack the necessary academic skills to pass tests such as the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' equivalency tests for apprenticeships; academic upgrading is therefore supportive of the vocational programs.

VOCATIONAL PROGRAMS

A reciprocal arrangement between Vanier Centre and the neighboring Ontario Correctional Institute (OCI) for men (medium security) gives selected residents an opportunity to engage in courses not available in their own institution.

The programs with a life skills orientation are: work experience program, diploma of training, and trades training.

The work experience program involves modules of training in various structural and non-structural settings: industrial sewing, laundry/dry cleaning, groundskeeping, volume cooking, housekeeping and industrial maintenance. Basic generic work skills are learned and are adaptable to any related work situation in the community.

A diploma of training is awarded after successful completion of specialized training in one of the above settings.

The hairdressing program at Vanier is a trade training course accredited by the Ministry of Colleges and Universities.

Residents who qualify for an education temporary absence may take part in training at the OCI in such courses as woodworking and welding.

RECREATION PROGRAM

The recreation program includes some inter-institution activities with the OCI. It is aimed at introducing residents to a more constructive and self-fulfilling way of using their leisure time. Programs offered cover a wide variety of social, cultural and physical activities with emphasis on:

- (1) developing residents' awareness of their leisure needs;
- (2) providing residents with opportunities to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills for a meaningful and socially acceptable leisure time involvement both within the institution and in the community.

CHAPLAINCY

An inter-denominational service is conducted weekly at Vanier, sponsored by a multi-faith chaplaincy team which includes interns.

For those residents who qualify for the Temporary Absence Program, access is provided to the many churches in the immediate Brampton area.

STAFFING

As research studies have confirmed, correctional officers play a key role at Vanier, working with residents on a one-to-one basis. While all correctional officers are primarily peace officers, security and program blend unobtrusively in Vanier's positive program atmosphere. Correctional officers can thus expand their role in program and in inter-personal relationships, and have ready access to consultation with the multi-disciplinary staff.

Each cottage is managed by a cottage supervisor, who ensures that the cottage program is implemented and provides supervision for the assigned correctional officers.

The cottage supervisor is assisted by clinical personnel (psychologist or social worker) and a shift supervisor attached to that cottage.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

Increasingly, programming at Vanier is being geared toward community re-integration and community involvement.

Initially, Ingleside was viewed as the community cottage, with residents engaging in daily employment and education activities in the community. Similar opportunities now are available to residents in the medium security complex through the expansion of the Temporary Absence Program.

The program also provides residents with opportunities to engage in non-traditional female vocational activities. Through close collaboration with community residential agencies, selected Vanier residents now spend considerable time in community settings preparing for discharge and eventual assimilation into the community.

Volunteers play a key role in this expanded community involvement. While more and more volunteers, such as those associated with Elizabeth Fry, the Salvation Army and the ministry's volunteer program are offering their services inside the institution, some Vanier residents are engaging in community volunteer work as part of their program.



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